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SUBJECT: NSF DIRECTOR'S VISIT HIGHLIGHTS US-BRAZIL SCIENTIFIC
COOPERATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION.

REF: A) BRASILIA 1523, B) BRASILIA 1603

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY. The visit to Brasilia and Sao Paulo by National Science Foundation (NSF) Director, Dr. Arden Bement and Brazil Program Manager from the NSF Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE), Dr. Carmina Londono, included several very productive meetings with GOB agencies and Brazilian academic institutions. NSF's visit highlighted the continued USG interest in spurring scientific collaboration with Brazil, promoting investment in R&D and education that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, and emphasizing IPR awareness as an integral component for turning knowledge into technology.
END SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

12. (U) NSF Director Dr. Arden Bement and NSF OISE's Brazil Program Manager Dr. Carmina Londono visited Brazil from December first through December fifth, 2008. The impetus for the visit was an invitation to Dr. Bement to speak on "Engineers as Strategic Visionaries" at the World Engineering Conference, held in Brasilia during the same week. The NSF representatives, accompanied by Science Officers, visited various government agencies and academic institutions involved in funding or conducting scientific research. Dr. Bement and Dr. Londono stayed in Brasilia December first through the fourth and then traveled to Sao Paulo for a full day of meetings on December fifth.

13. (U) Meetings in Brasilia included the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq); the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA); the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES); the Ministry of Science and Technology; the Ministry of External Relations; and the University of Brasilia. In Sao Paulo, Dr. Bement met with Dr. Jose Goldemberg, former Secretary for the Environment for the State of Sao Paulo, Dr. Hans Viertler, Director of the Chemistry Department of the University of Sao Paulo; the Butantan Institute; the Foundation for the Promotion of Research of the State of Sao Paulo (FAPESP); and the Institute for Technological Research (IPT).

CURRENT NSF ACTIVITIES IN BRAZIL

14. (U) The NSF has approximately 350 active awards that fund U.S. academic institutions involved in activities with Brazil. Dr. Bement pointed out that this places Brazil in the top 8 countries in terms of NSF-funded research and represents over 11 million dollars

in grants. Brazil and the U.S. share scientific research interests in key areas such as biofuels, cyber-infrastructure, sustainable energy research, bio-diversity, and mathematics among others.

¶15. (U) NSF collaborative work with CNPq is the most active of all countries in Latin America and it is highly competitive especially in the areas of biology and the mathematical and physical sciences. Dr. Bement urged CNPq to participate in a unique NSF international Chemistry program which calls for a single chemistry proposal developed jointly by the U.S. investigator and counterparts in Brazil. Presently the NSF Chemistry Division is interested in expanding the Program to Latin America and in particular to Brazil.

INNOVATION

¶16. (U) Innovation was a recurring theme during the visit. Several Brazilian agencies and organizations mentioned to Dr. Bement that innovation is a priority for the GOB and the academic community. In each case the principal indicated that they were eager to work with the NSF on promoting increased innovation in Brazil. During the meetings, Brazilian contacts emphasized their high-level interest in promoting innovation. The Minister of Science and Technology, Sergio Rezende, told Dr. Bement that innovation is one of his top four priorities, a fact that he has shared with Embassy Officers before.

¶17. (U) In meetings with CNPq, the Ministry of Foreign Relations (MRE), the Ministry of Science and Technology (MCT), FAPESP, and CAPES, the Brazilian principals mentioned that they see the U.S. as the leader in innovation and asked Dr. Bement to comment. Dr. Bement indicated that the NSF has a variety of activities focused on supporting the key elements for encouraging innovation. These elements include strong investment in science education, IPR protection, and encouraging broader participation. Another

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important mechanism to stimulate innovation in different fields is through workshops. For instance NSF has been collaborating with CNPq and FAPESP to organize a workshop on "Water and Land Use Implications of Biofuel Production" and looks forward to carrying it out in 2009. Each country will select a scientist to serve as the country organizer and approximately 40 to 50 scientists will be invited to participate in the workshop. Dr. Bement envisioned other similar workshops to address different aspects of innovation for other fields. This idea was enthusiastically received by his Brazilian counterparts. (NOTE. Innovation has been a recurring theme in many meetings with GOB contacts. The topic was discussed in the Economic Partnership Dialogue (REFTEL A) and the preparatory meeting for the Joint Commission Meeting on Science and Technology (REFTEL B). END NOTE.)

RECONNECTING THE BRAZILIAN DIASPORA

¶18. (U) Ambassador Amado of the MRE spoke with Dr. Bement about the importance of connecting Brazilian expatriate researchers with their counterparts in Brazil to enhance and increase cooperative research. Dr. Bement pointed out that there is no one U.S. agency charged with tracking Brazilian researchers in the U.S. due to U.S. privacy laws. In this regard, letters to professional societies and journals from the MRE inviting expatriates to re-connect with their counterparts might be an appropriate mechanism.

NEW IDEAS FOR COOPERATIVE RESEARCH

¶19. (U) Dr. Bement consistently promoted the use of emerging information technologies as a powerful tool to increase international scientific collaboration in a knowledge economy. Developing information networks will allow the conduct of science to become a 24/7 business that will easily and rapidly cross borders and allow for research at remote locations.

¶10. (U) An example of NSF's bottoms-up concept of encouraging collaborative research is the idea of joint PhD programs to be supervised or sponsored by a university in the U.S. and a university in Brazil. Dr. Bement endorsed this idea as a way of exposing the

next generation of researchers to the idea of international cooperation in research and the benefits that it brings. These programs are frequently initiated by university to university contacts.

RESEARCH FACILITY VISITS

¶11. (U) Dr. Bement and Dr. Londono visited research facilities in both Brasilia and Sao Paulo. In Brasilia they saw two award winning laboratories at the University of Brasilia, one focused on biology and the other on geochronology; and an EMBRAPA facility, including a laboratory that is developing biological agents to be used against disease vectors. In Sao Paulo, they visited Instituto Butantan, a biotech facility that focuses on vaccines against animal toxins, parasites, and other micro-organisms; and the IPT, where Dr. Bement was particularly interested in the proposed nano-manufacturing research center that is under construction.

COMMENT

¶12. (U) COMMENT. The NSF Director's visit to Brazil was very productive, both for the NSF and Mission Brazil. Dr. Bement was able to find many areas of mutual interest between the NSF and various Brazilian agencies. Embassy Brasilia and Consulate General Sao Paulo look forward to following up on the developed ideas for increasing scientific and technical cooperation. Science Officers will take an active role in coordinating between the NSF and interested GOB agencies to promote more joint activities, including the "Water and Land Use Implications of Biofuel Production" workshop and workshops that look at different aspects of innovation. New joint activities will strengthen the U.S. commitment to helping Brazil address its need for increased innovation.

¶13. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED. The success of these meetings is further evidence of the increasing ties between Brazil and the U.S. within the scientific and technological communities, as well as the increasing similarity in science and technology interests of our two countries. These ties, and the Brazilians' eagerness to encourage innovation, also provide the USG with the opportunity to use existing ties to tackle contentious issues, such as IPR, in a context of building a larger group of Brazilian stakeholders who grasp the importance of these policies to Brazil's future development. END COMMENT.

¶14. This cable was coordinated with Consulate General Sao Paulo and the National Science Foundation.

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